The Dragon's School is on The Top of The Mountain

by Kui Ryoko

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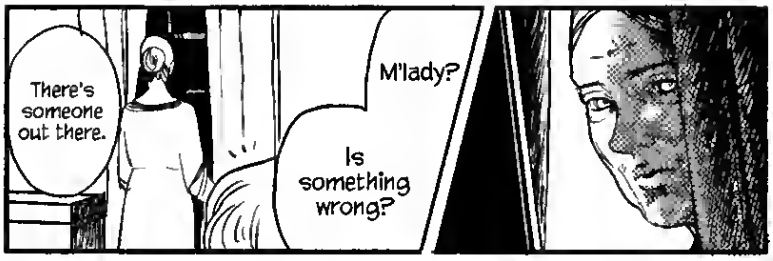
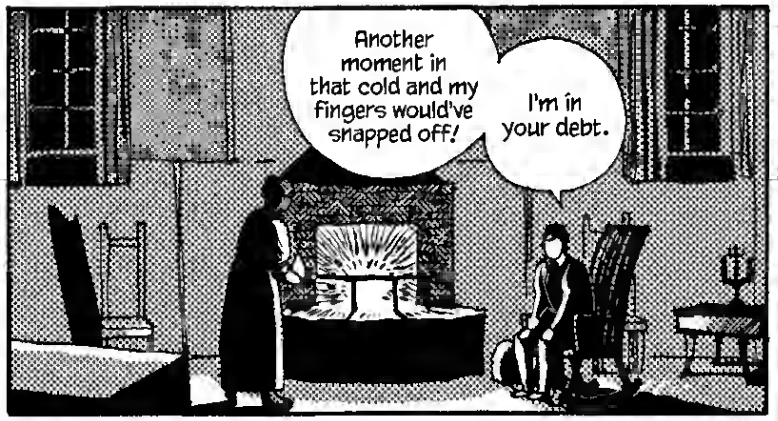
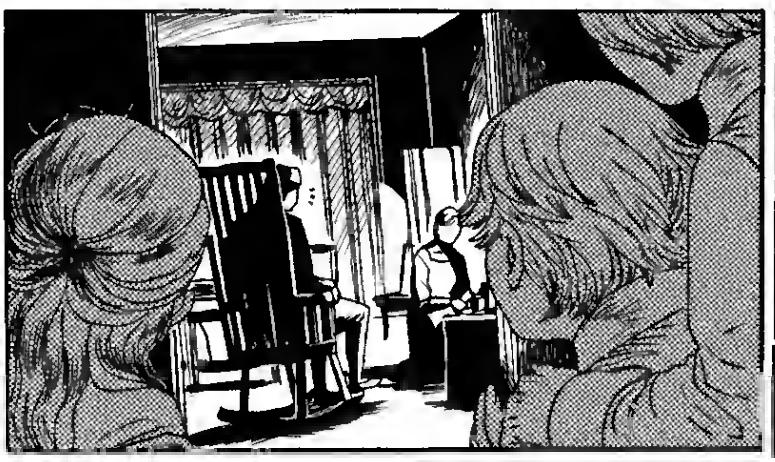
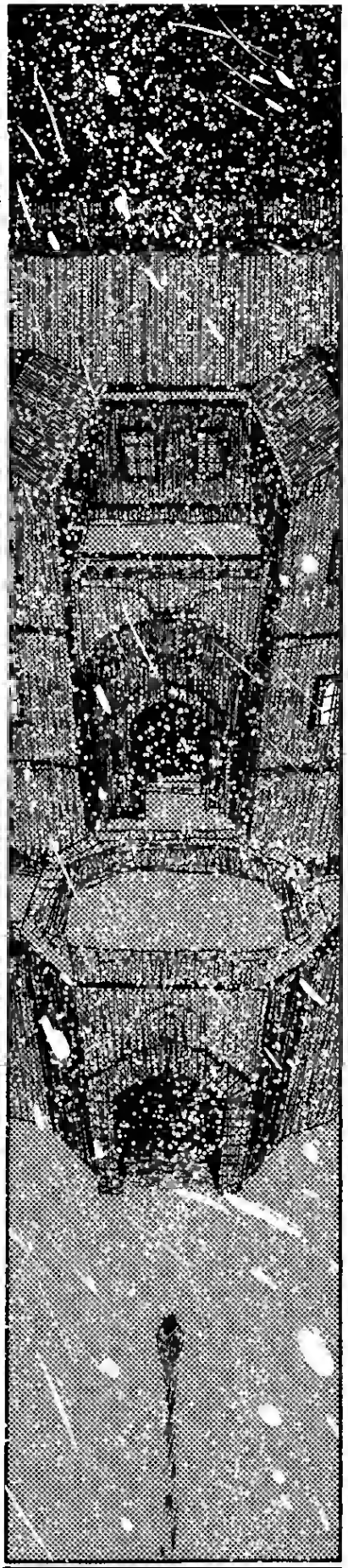

There's someone out there.
M'lady?
Is something wrong?

Please, I seek lodging for the night.

It's a minstrel's job to wander.
What are you doing wandering about in this weather?


Another moment in that cold and my fingers would've snapped off!
I'm in your debt.



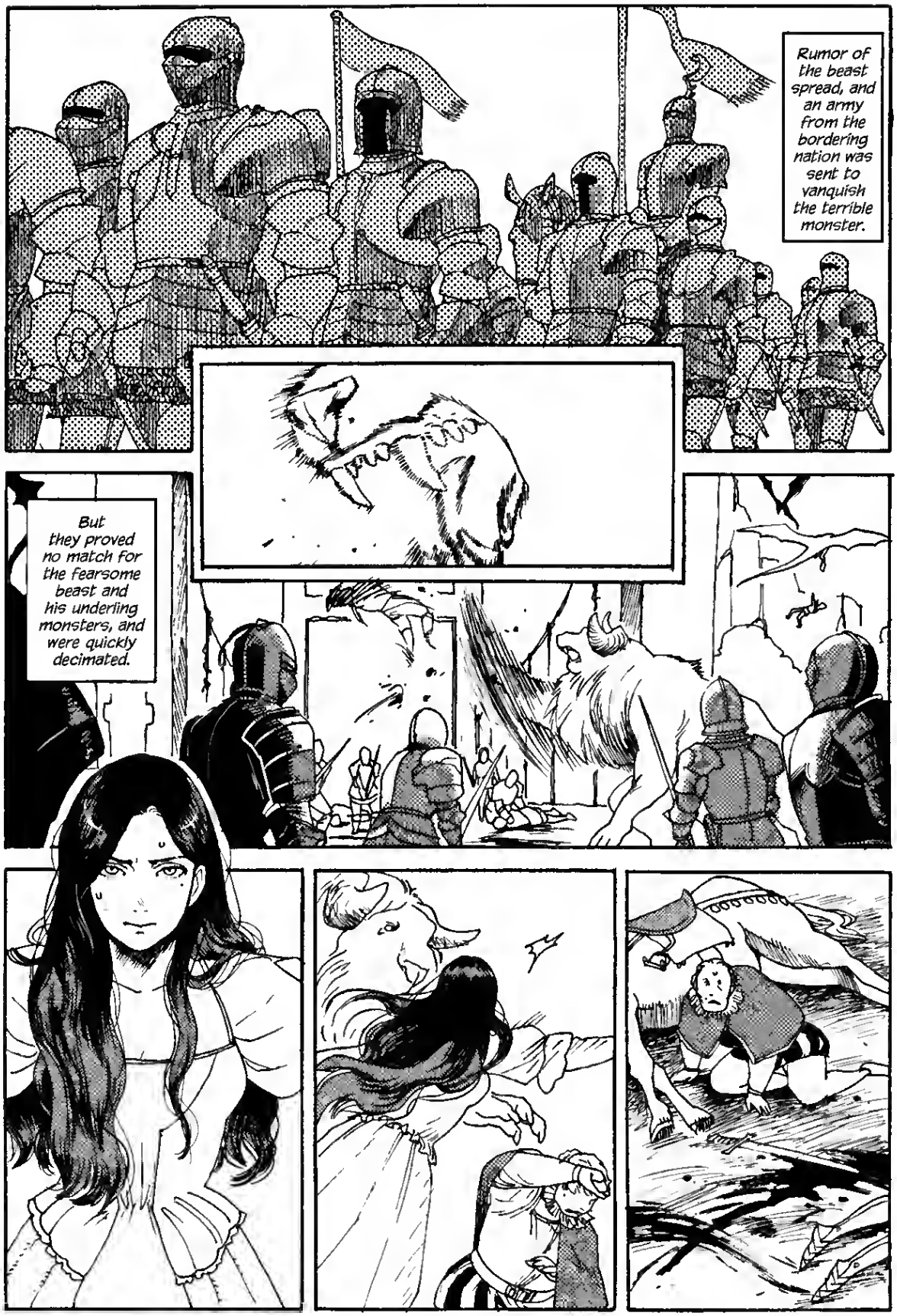


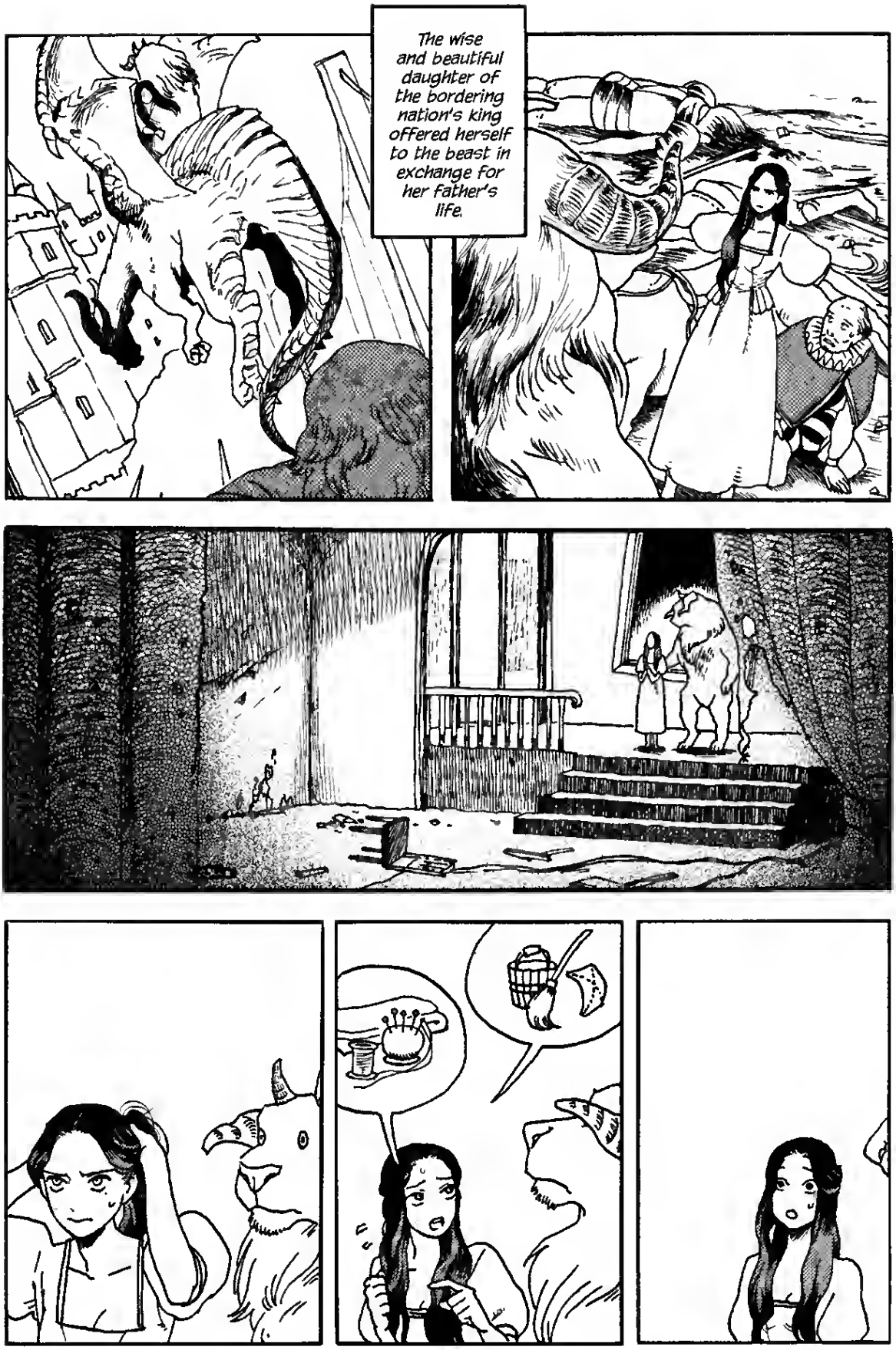
The Beast

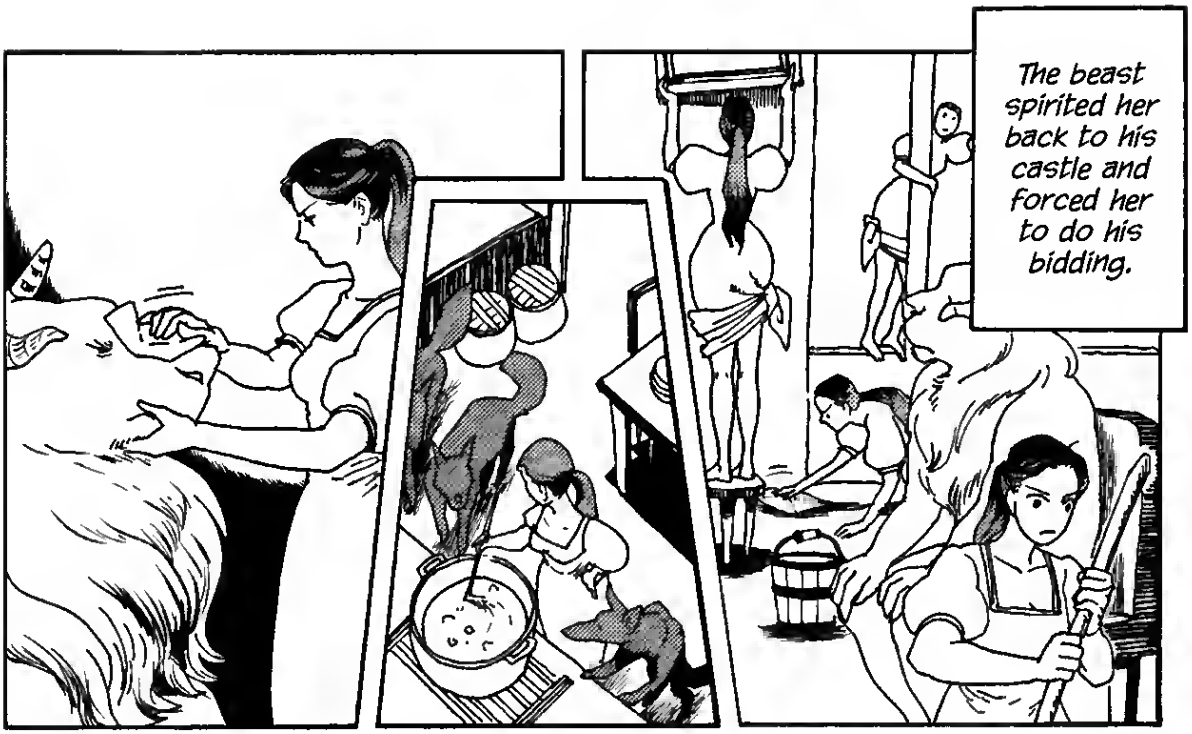
WOA!
The fearless horse thief!
No, the one about the sunken city!
The one about the dragon who swallowed a pile of gold!
Perchance you know a love story?
It's already past your bedtime, kids!
Well then, what story shall I do next?
Haha, you're a wonderful audience!
Please!
Tell us another!
What's the next story?
I'll tell a story from these very lands.
Perhaps we need a change of pace.
A story of a king... and his curse.

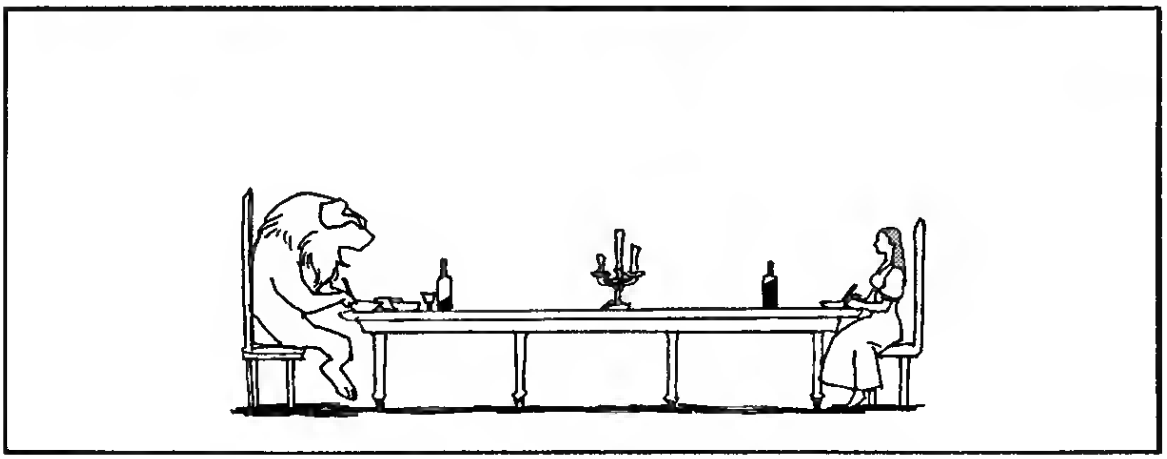
There once reigned a haughty and arrogant King.
One rainy night, an old and haggard witch came to the king's palace and begged for shelter for the night.
But the king rebuked her, and demanded she be sent back into the rain.

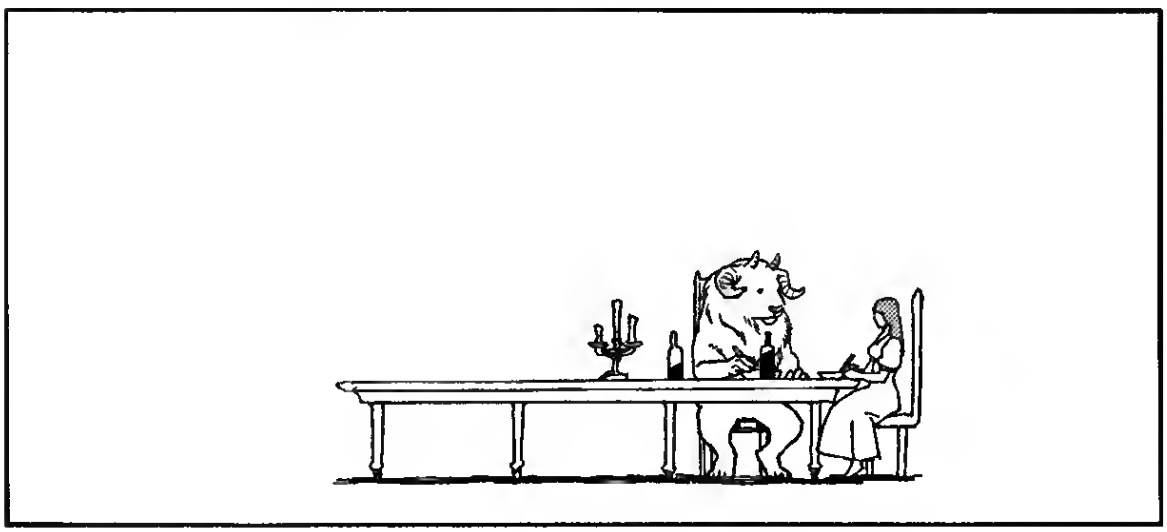
"Only true love's kiss shall free you of this curse."
the king's form was transformed into that of a terrible beast.
Suddenly,
With that, the witch sneered wickedly and faded like mist.
In anger, the beast ransacked villages for every woman he could find.
But none of them could break the cursed chains that shackled him to his beastly form.

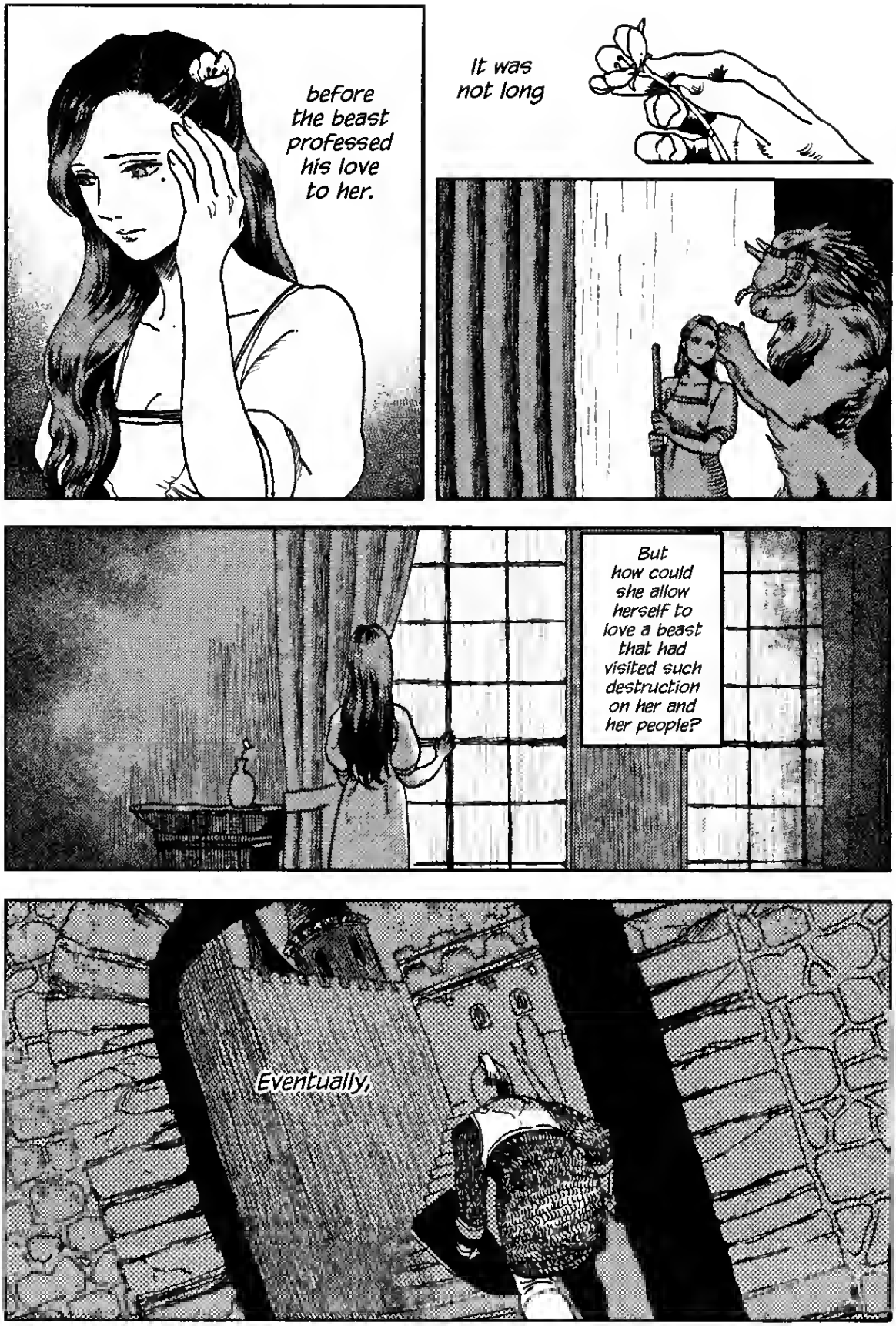

Rumor of the beast spread, and an army from the bordering nation was sent to vanquish the terrible monster.
But they proved no match for the fearsome beast and his underling monsters, and were quickly decimated.

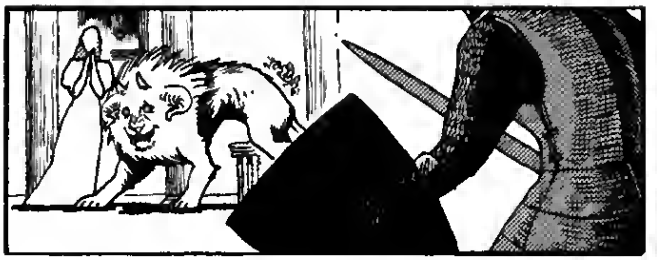

The wise and beautiful daughter of the bordering nation's king offered herself to the beast in exchange for her father's life.

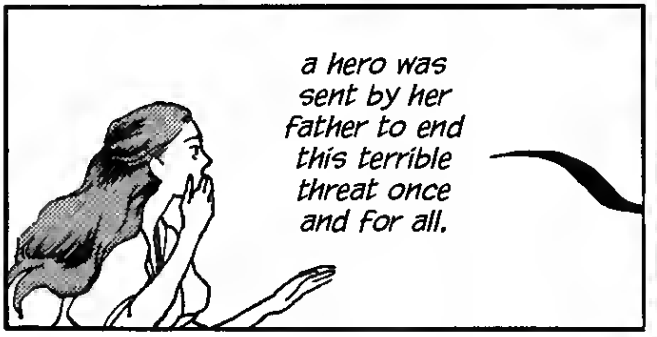

The beast spirited her back to his castle and forced her to do his bidding.



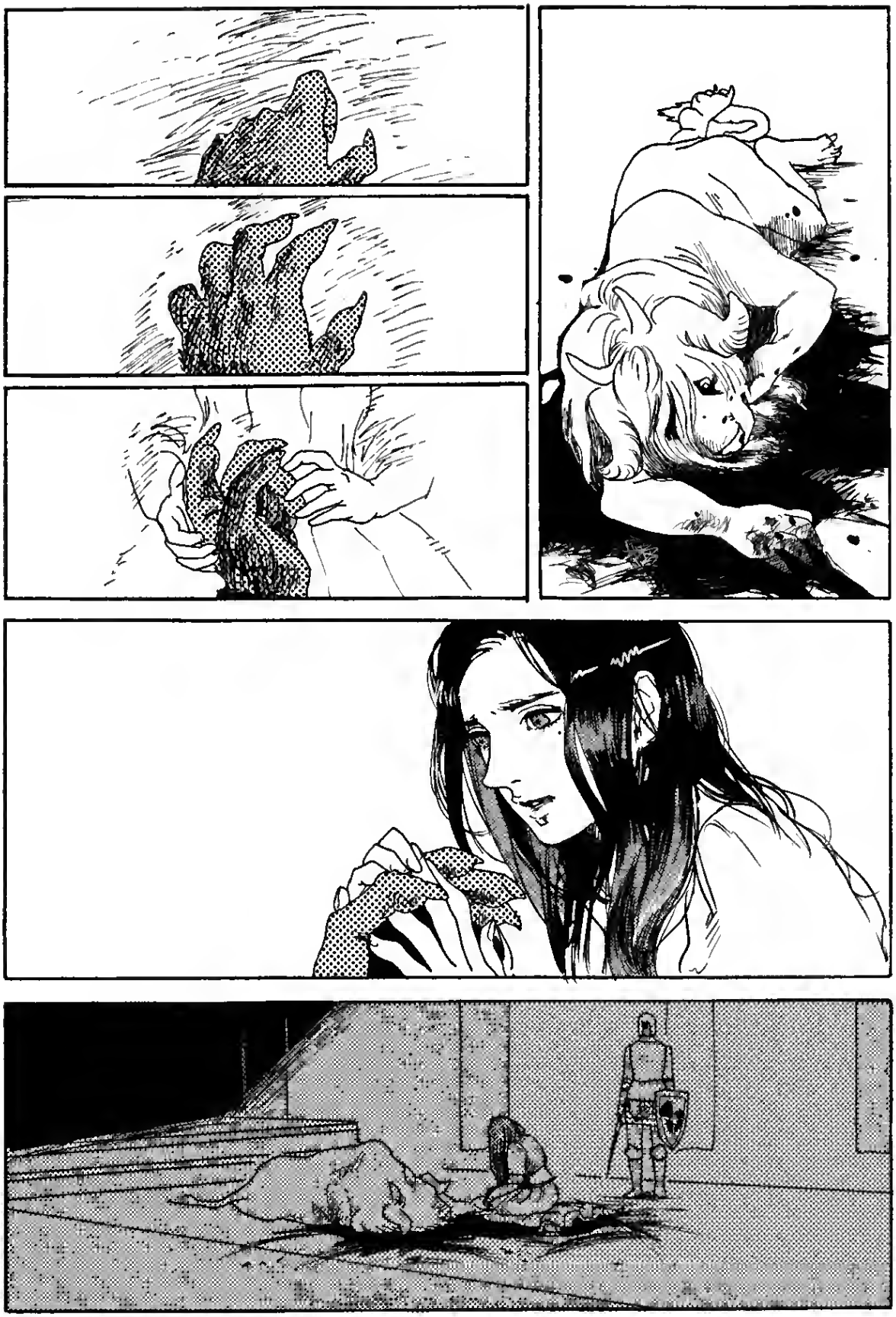



before the beast professed his love to her.
It was not long
But how could she allow herself to love a beast that had visited such destruction on her and her people?
Eventually,




a hero was sent by her father to end this terrible threat once and for all.

And the beast was finally slain.



Looks as though I'll have to finish this story another time.
Come along children, you'll catch a cold out here.
Ah.
After which, this great hero...
If she had just been a common villager, maybe the story would have had a happier ending.
That girl...

The woman offered nary a word after that.

The End